

O 171416Z JUN 09  
FM AMEMBASSY ABU DHABI  
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 2619  
INFO GULF COOPERATION COUNCIL COLLECTIVE

C O N F I D E N T I A L ABU DHABI 000622

STATE FOR NEA/ARP, G/TIP, DRL, PRM, INL

E.O. 12958: DECL: 6/17/2019

TAGS: [PREL](#) [PHUM](#) [KCRM](#) [KTIP](#) [ELAB](#) [AE](#)

SUBJECT: UAE: STATE DEPARTMENT TIP REPORT "DISAPPOINTING AND DISTORTED"

REFS: ABU DHABI 603 AND PREVIOUS

Classified by Ambassador Richard Olson, reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

11. (U) Summary: Following release of the TIP report in Washington June 16, the UAEG's official news agency WAM issued a sharply-worded statement condemning the UAE text as "disappointing and distorted." The UAEG accused the report of "changing the goal posts", lacking objectivity in evaluating the UAE's "transparent efforts", and relying on "sensationalized media reports". Local media has responded to the report by printing the WAM statement verbatim (text in paragraph 2). End summary.

-----  
OFFICIAL STATEMENT  
-----

12. (U) Begin Text of June 16 statement:

The UAE on Tuesday termed as "disappointing and distorted" a US State Department report that failed to accurately assess the status of anti-trafficking efforts during the last year.

The UAE government is deeply disappointed by the subjective and inaccurate assessment in this report" Minister of State for Foreign Affairs Dr. Anwar Gargash said.

In contrast to the US report, the Annual Report 2008 released earlier this month by the UAE National Committee to Combat Human Trafficking (NCCHT) indicated that over 20 cases of human trafficking were registered last year, compared to 10 cases in 2007, doubling the number of cases prosecuted under Federal Law 51 in a period of 12 months.

Similarly, the NCCHT report added that the number of prosecutions and the severity of punishments issued by UAE courts also increased significantly this year, with convictions in six cases and two people receiving life sentences.

Citing these figures, Dr. Gargash said, "The UAE made significant progress in its endeavor fight this crime in 2008. In its last report, the State Department identified the UAE as "a model in the region." It is indeed disturbing to note that this year's report has failed to view our transparent efforts and results objectively.

The minister, who is also chairman of the NCCHT, criticized the parameters applied to measure human trafficking cases.

It appears that the US definition of human trafficking varies every year depending on the nature of debate on this issue in its domestic environment. It is incongruous to equate alleged labor rights violations, which are a critical but separate issue, to the coercive and unacceptable sexual exploitation of women for profit. This report lumps all these issues together in a manner that is generalized and unconstructive. Changing goal posts has unfortunately become a feature of these trafficking reports and they have thereby lost credibility as a constructive measuring tool of anti-trafficking efforts around the world.

Citing one of the many inaccuracies, the minister questioned the veracity of the State Department report which alleges that a member of the ruling family was arrested in a Belgian court on criminal charges, a claim the UAE refutes and describes as unwarranted and

appalling display of stereotyping Arabs and the Middle East.

"This accusation alone indicates that the US prefers to rely more on sensationalized media reports in compiling its report rather than verify its facts." Dr. Gargash said.

"The UAE monitors all international reports and assesses them objectively. It welcomes constructive criticism and help, but reserves the right to determine the agenda to tackle its problems in a manner that it deems appropriate. The fact that the report does not take into account the facts on the ground devalues and undermines how seriously it is taken," he added.

The government realizes that like in many other countries, the challenges pertaining to human trafficking are numerous. We are committed to fighting this crime and will continue to do so diligently," the minister said.

The UAE continues to implement its four-pillar action plan that includes legislation, enforcement, victim support, as well as bilateral agreements and international cooperation.

During the last year, the government ratified the United Nations Protocol to Prevent, Suppress, and Punish Trafficking in Persons, especially Women and Children; and in order to increase the government's effectiveness, the Council of Ministers expanded the size and scope of the National Committee to Combat Human Trafficking by including public prosecutors and law enforcement officers as its members.

Additionally, workshops and training sessions were conducted frequently throughout the year, in collaboration with the International Organization for Migration, to improve the skills of UAE law enforcement officials. A new website was launched to serve both as an official information source, as well as a forum for interaction between the public and government.

In terms of victim support efforts, the Dubai Foundation for Women and Children continues to mature and provide excellent psychological and physical care for victims of trafficking and other forms of abuse - in 2008 43 cases were admitted. The newly established Abu Dhabi shelter handled 15 trafficking victims, who also aided police in the investigations of the criminals who exploited them.

The UAE is pursuing traffickers aggressively and they will be severely punished under the UAE's anti-trafficking law. The UAE's commitment to this issue is part of its national agenda as well as a shared responsibility as a member of the community of nations. End Text.

13. (C) COMMENT: The sharp UAEG reaction is not a surprise. Following the UAE's elevation to Tier 2 last year and USG description of the UAE's efforts on TIP as a "a model in the region", there is astonishment that their public campaign to demonstrate progress in anti-TIP efforts resulted in their demotion to the tier 2 watch list. The inclusion of the Belgian case involving a member of a ruling family is a source of embarrassment, and likely the reason for the immediate silence from local media. End comment.

OLSON